

**PROGRESS IN PRIMARY  
SCHOOL INSTRUCTION  
IN MASSACHUSETTS**

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Progress in Primary School Instruction in Massachusetts by Various

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TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

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\*.\* Copies of this Report may be had by sending to E. P. SEEVER,  
School Committee Rooms, Boston.

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS.

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A REPORT BY A COMMITTEE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS  
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

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YOUR Committee have this year limited their inquiries to primary schools. For the purpose of collecting information, a circular was prepared and sent to "the superintendent of public schools or the chairman of the school committee" of each town and city in the State. The questions in the circular were the following: (1) Name of your city or town. (2) Are the schools graded? N. B. If the schools are not graded, consider the following questions as referring to the younger pupils,—those in the first three or four years of school life. (3) Is there a definite course of study for the primary grades? (4) What branches are in this course of study, or are taught to the younger pupils? Please send printed course of study, if you have one. (5) Is drawing taught? In what grades? (6) Is singing taught? What instruction is given other than teaching the children by rote to sing songs? (7) What lessons specially intended to train the observing powers of children are given? (8) In what part of

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the primary course, if in any, are children taught to use writing as a means of expressing their own thoughts? (9) What success has attended exercises of this sort? (10) Are children taught to *print* before they are taught to write? (11) In what grade do children first use pen and ink? (12) What method is used for teaching beginners to read, — the word-method, the phonic, the "A B C," or some other? (13) Recent changes and improvements in the primary course of study. (14) Recent improvements in the methods of teaching primary school branches. (15) Please favor the committee with any further remarks you can make on the evidences of educational progress in your locality.

#### THE ANSWERS.

Responses were received from one hundred and forty-seven towns and cities. Their names are here given in three lists.

THE FIRST is a list of those reporting their schools graded, and provided with definite courses of study, as follows:

Abington, Amesbury, Attleborough, Ayer, Boston, Bradford, Brockton, Brookfield, Brookline, Canton, Chatham, Chelmsford, Clinton, Cohasset, Concord, Dedham, Dracut, Easthampton, Everett, Fairhaven, Fall River, Falmouth, Fitchburg, Foxborough, Framingham, Gloucester, Greenfield, Groveland, Haverhill, Hingham, Holyoke, Hyde Park, Lawrence, Lexington, Lynn, Malden, Marlborough, Melrose, Merrimac, Middleborough, Milford, Nantucket, Needham, Northampton, Pittsfield, Randolph,



Revere, Rockport, Shelburne, Somerville, South Abington, Southbridge, Springfield, Stockbridge, Stoneham, Townsend, Walpole, Waltham, Warren, Watertown, Webster, Westborough, West Boylston, Westfield, Weston, Winthrop, Woburn, Worcester.

THE SECOND list is of those reporting their schools partially graded, and provided with somewhat definite courses of study, but with much left to the irregular option of teachers, as follows:

Ashland, Barre, Bedford, Bolton, Braintree, Bridgewater, Buckland, Cheshire, Cottage City, Danvers, Douglas, East Bridgewater, Easton, Enfield, Holden, Huntington, Leicester, Leominster, Lynnfield, Mansfield, Medfield, Milton, Newburyport, Northbridge, Salisbury, Sandwich, Sharon, Shrewsbury, Spencer, Sutton, Westford, Westminster, Williamsburg, Williamstown, Wrentham.

THE THIRD list is of those reporting schools not graded, and provided with no definite courses of study, other than a mere list of the branches taught, as follows:

Acushnet, Ashfield, Becket, Bellingham, Berkeley, Billerica, Boxford, Carlisle, Charlton, Chilmark, Dover, Dunstable, Granby, Granville, Hanson, Harvard, Hull, Kingston, Leverett, Leyden, Lincoln, Lunenburg, Mendon, Middleton, Monterey, New Braintree, Newbury, North New Salem, North Reading, Norton, Pembroke, Petersham, Plympton, Prescott, Raynham, Savoy, Sherborn, Shutesbury, Sterling, Sudbury, Sunderland, Tewksbury, Washington, Wendell, West Hampton.

**COURSES OF STUDY.**

Courses of study in print or in manuscript were received from twenty-six places. Some of these were rather bare outlines, but still indicated a grading of the work from year to year. They were described as temporary or tentative in character, and had not been long in use. More elaborate and carefully drawn courses, which would be well worth the study of those who are interested in such matters, were received from Ayer, Boston, Bridgewater, Brookline, Danvers, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lynn, Malden, Northampton, Pittsfield, Waltham, and Woburn.

The branches embraced in these courses of study, besides the usual reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic, are observation lessons, oral exercises in language, drawing, singing, physical exercises, and good behavior. In a few places modelling in clay has been introduced; in a few others some of the Kindergarten occupations for "busy work."

The graded courses of study rarely include geography, although they sometimes prescribe exercises designed to prepare for studying that branch later. In the ungraded schools geography is quite frequently set down as one of the regular studies; and occasionally one is surprised at finding history and grammar also. This indicates the somewhat chaotic state of the primary school studies in many of the smaller towns. The line of progress seems to lie in the direction of eliminating such unsuitable studies from the primary school course, and properly adapting those that remain to the capacity of young children.

The grading of schools and the carrying into operation

of definite courses of study are recent improvements in many towns, and no little difficulty is experienced in obtaining satisfactory results. There seems to be a desire, on the part of the school committees, to call on some higher authority, whose directions and decisions relative to courses of study will be generally accepted by teachers and parents as final. This is shown by such expressions as the following :

"Am much perplexed by the diversity of grades in the several schools. Should most heartily welcome from the State Board a course of study to be pursued in all the schools, in grades suitable for general adoption." (Williamstown.)

"We are not making any great progress ; which I attribute to the fact of a lack of *system*. If there could be a course of study prescribed by law, it would be better. Can you not, in your report, give some suggestions which will help the schools in small towns?" (Huntington.)

The study and criticism of existing courses of study, if it could be carried on in a systematic way with a view to improvement and to the ultimate determination of the best, would be a most important and useful work. Perhaps it is the work which the schools now most need to have done. But your committee would not feel prepared, even if there were time and other circumstances favored, to enter at large upon such a work.

Some matter for discussion, and perhaps some useful suggestions of the kind desired, may be found in the two courses of study here given. They are selected from those sent in, because they seem to be good in themselves and well adapted to the wants of smaller towns.